



Technology is No Substitute for Effective Communication, Trust and Leadership Development

By: Kelly Graves "The Corporate Therapist™"

Super software will not cure all your organizational ills! Digital systems will not trim the fat off your budget! Strategic plan software will never help you implement your cool new plan! As organizational development consultants we have to admit that we are just as intrigued by purposeful or fun trends as the next person, but we also have an obligation to speak the truth in front of seductive technologies and their impressive draws: There simply is no substitute for rolling up your sleeves and getting to know the needs of your people and customers.

Yes. Trendy programs can be pretty darn cool.

Yes. Software, new facilities and improved programs can be very helpful and may even save you plenty under the right conditions.

But, no tool will work if you do not have successful communication, trust and professional development as the foundation for your organization. One way to develop successful communication with your people is to recognize what stage they are in as a group. With each new passing day in business, trend or program change, groups go through predictable stages.

Having an awareness of these stages will help individuals and leaders to recognize and accept these natural phases. You and your people will likely feel a heightened level of safety and security in knowing where you are on your journey and what you need to do to get to the next stage successfully.

Below is one model of group development first proposed by Bruce Tuckman in 1965. It is well-known and highly effective in helping groups and their leaders understand what to look for and then what to do to increase a group's communication, trust and leadership effectiveness through stages of change. If your organization is facing change brought on by the introduction of a new idea, a new program or a trend, we recommend you give this model some thought.

Consider sharing this information with your people to open up a dialogue and begin to build trust. All groups regardless of their history and regardless of their level of knowledge or skills will go through or remain stuck in these stages. As you read through these, locate where you are and then decide if you want to create effective change and then take steps toward improving your team, department or organization.

Four Stages of Group Development: Forming — Storming — Norming — Performing

<i>Stage of Team Development</i>	<u>Forming</u>	<u>Storming</u>	<u>Norming</u>	<u>Performing</u>
<i>Typical Feelings and Thoughts in this Stage</i>	In this initial “honeymoon” stage, the team structure is coming together, so conflict is usually avoided at all costs. Team members need to be accepted into the group so they tend to be reflective about tasks and each other.	In this testing-each-other stage competition and conflict are common because differences in organizational processes and interpersonal conflicts will surface. When the focus of the team changes from problem identification to problem solving, the group grows beyond this stage.	In this stage, team members break from preconceived ideas, opinions and paradigms. Trust and cohesion become the norms. Leadership is shared. Conflict gives way to sharing and creative thinking. Members of the group are happy to be part of the team.	In this stage, the foundation is one of positive interpersonal relationships, interdependence, flexibility, adaptability and high productivity. This team has mastered the art and science of their work and now adds great value to the organization and each other.
<i>Observable Behaviors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excitement, anticipation and optimism. • Suspicion, fear and anxiety about the job ahead. • Pride in being chosen for the group. • Politeness. • Guarded; watchful. • Sporadic participation. • First agreements. • Discussion of symptoms and problems not relevant to the task; difficulty indentifying relevant problems. • Complaints about the organization. • Impatience with discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to task. • Fluctuations in attitude about the team. • Do I agree with the team’s approach to accomplishing the task? • Arguing among members. • Defensiveness and competition. • Polarizations and pecking orders on teams. • Attacking leader. • Questioning wisdom of the other team members. • Interpersonal relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging to team. • Personal accomplishments. • I have freedom to be myself and express my ideas. • Ability to express criticism constructively • Relief that it seems that everything is going to work out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High personal development and creativity. • Involvement with team inspires the best in individuals. • Understanding of each other’s strengths and weaknesses leads to high personal accountability Constructive self-change. • Flexibility, versatility and midcourse corrections. • Excited participation, enthusiasm and volunteerism.

<p><i>What the Team Needs During this Stage</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team mission and purpose. • Team membership. Team goals and objectives. • Effective meetings and facilitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective listening. • Giving and receiving feedback. • Leadership clarification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures established and practiced in problem solving, leadership, resolving conflict. • Open, honest communication; practicing communication skills. • Free participation and risk taking. • Unified mission and purpose. • Strong team identity. • Management coaching. • Leadership skills training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressions of pride in team’s unique accomplishments. • Ability to work through group problems. • Management and creative use of team resources. • Coaching and counseling. • Measuring performance on an ongoing basis. • Refinements on how successfully focus on internal and external customers.
<p><i>Leadership Style Required to Achieve Success</i></p>	<p>Directing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telling. • Guiding. • Establishing high and low task relationship involvement. • Boundaries. 	<p>Coaching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing guidance. • Clarifying. High task and high relationship involvement. • Leader consults with followers, but leader makes final decision. 	<p>Supporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committing. • Participating. • Encouraging. Listening. • Collaborating. • High relationship and low task involvement. • Asks for contributions from followers. 	<p>Delegation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observing. • Monitoring. • Fulfilling. • Leader sets goals; team accomplishes.

Keep in mind when you are tempted to drop a dime on any number of quick fixes. Business models may appear to be what you need. Even, computer programs may seem like the “safe” bet. But, they may seem safe because you are caught in the fantasy or illusion that if we buy the new “widget” then we’ll become the success. Models, diagrams, computer programs, technologies and trends are just tools. That’s ALL they are. Tools. In the hands of the right people, they will enhance a good thing. But, on their own, THEY will not help us change our behaviors. They

alone will not help us improve our communication. They alone will not build trust or buy-in. They won't do our work. They will only postpone the inevitable. Make no mistake about this.

Businesses succeed or fail through their people. The better your people communicate with each other and your internal and external customers, the better off your business will be. Then, utilize the models, the best technologies, and the motivational programs, but always with the caveat to see them for what they are: just tools to help your people grow and develop your organization and themselves.

Kelly Graves is the founder of Chico-based Internal Business Solutions Consulting. He specializes in individual and organizational development. Liz Bilinsky is a behavioral and communications specialist and trainer. As business partners, Kelly and Liz consult with local and national organizations in both the public and private sectors. Additional information about their consulting services can be found online at www.ProfitWithIBS.com, e-mail kelly@ProfitWithIBS.com or call (530) 321-5309; toll free: 1-800-704-3785.